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Latin Church Conference Opens in France

(Le Chambon-sur-Lignon) - Protestants in the Latin countries of Europe have been urged to "let the Gospel speak in its simplicity, nakedness and purity" in a speech by the general secretary of the World Council of Churches at a week-long conference of Protestant churchmen from six European countries opened in Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, France.

Addressing a public meeting on September 20, Dr. W.A. Visser 't Hooft told 80 delegates and 70 other participants that many of the Protestant churches in predominantly Roman Catholic countries were "poor and humble", but he added that they had "the immense advantage of being able to proclaim the simple and pure message of Christ alone". He told the Latin church leaders: "If other things are added to Christ they detract from the stature of Christ himself".

Dr. Visser 't Hooft's appeal came at the end of an address on "A Single Christian Witness in a Divided World". In a running survey of the "spiritual climate" in five major areas he underlined the fact that the often mentioned East-West division was paralleled by a North-South rift between capitalised and undercapitalised peoples. He said that Christians were now rightly concerned about the very small amount done to bridge this gulf, which seemed to be widening with the coming of atomic energy for peaceful purposes.

The United States of America, according to Dr. Visser 't Hooft, is today marked by "a search for security in every realm". He said that US foreign policy was explained by this quest, but that not enough long-range deep work had been done "to render atomic armament no longer necessary".

Describing the spiritual problem of Asia as "syncretism" (the attempt to mix all religions into one), Dr. Visser 't Hooft said that statesmen in Asian countries were often very religious, but that they valued Christianity for its social and educational work and did not want it to convert people to the view that "there is One Name under heaven given among men whereby you must be saved".

In Western Europe, where many people believe "history has exhausted its resources", the World Council's general secretary saw signs of new life in movements for Bible study, new methods of evangelism, the spread of the lay rallies associated with Germany's Kirchentag movement and new contacts with the masses in places outside Europe such as Algeria.

The situation in Eastern Europe was also referred to as giving signs of hope for the churches. Dr. Visser 't Hooft described the mentality of the Communist countries in Europe as "the twilight of political myths". He said that the force of Communism as an ideology with a hold on the young seemed to be nearly spent.

Professor d'Espine Elected Chairman

The conference opened officially on September 21 with the election of Professor Henri d'Espine of Geneva, Switzerland, as chairman. An opening service in the crowded local church of Le Chambon, seating 600 people, was conducted by Pastor Pierre Bourguet, president of the French Reformed Church.

The conference was requested by the churches and has been supported by the World Council's Division of Inter-Church Aid and Service to Refugees. Present are delegates from churches in France, Spain, Italy, Switzerland, Portugal and Belgium.

Professor d'Espine told the Protestant representative on Sunday night that "our divisions invalidate our witness and do not follow the will of God".

In an appeal to overcome the fragmentation of Protestant work, Professor d'Espine of the theological faculty of the University of Geneva, said: "We must speak about this without diplomacy and in brotherhood, and we must pray to God to bring these divisions to an end".

Pastor d'Espine described three positive tasks of Latin Protestant groups: evangelism, vindication of religious liberty and cooperation with Latin Protestant work outside Europe.

E.P.S., Geneva

Saxony Synod Changes Confirmation / Dedication Rules

(Dresden) - Children in Saxony who attend classes preparing them for the government-sponsored "youth dedication" services will also be able to receive instruction in the Christian faith, according to a new provisional plan adopted by the synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Saxony.

Under the new arrangement, general instruction in Christianity will be given separately from special preparation for confirmation and communion. Although the synod expressly reiterated that confirmation and youth dedication are incompatible, the new plan makes it possible for children who have taken part in the dedication to be admitted to confirmation. At least a year after participating in the ceremonies, a child who takes part in church life will be admitted to a three-months' course preparing all children for confirmation and communion. The next confirmation service will be held on Palm Sunday 1959, and the preparatory course will begin in the middle of January. E.P.S., Geneva

Council of Churches Set Up in Madagascar

(Antsirabe) - A council of churches, composed of churches and not mission societies, has been set up in Madagascar, replacing the Intermissionary Conference. The new council instructed its continuation committee to apply for membership in the International Missionary Council.

The groups involved are the Lutheran Church in Madagascar and the churches related to the London Missionary Society, the Paris Mission Society and the Friends Foreign Missionary Association. There are about 880,000 baptised members in the four bodies. E.P.S., Geneva

East German Pastors Urged to Stay at Their Posts

(Berlin) - The Council of the Evangelical Union Church has issued a communiqué urging all pastors in Germany's East Zone to stay at their posts.

Following a meeting in Berlin last week, the council said it is "carefully examining the causes of pressure, both spiritual and material, which are tempting many pastors to desert the congregations entrusted to their care. While fully understanding the human difficulties which arise in many pastors' homes because of the present situation, the council nevertheless confirms its view that a pastor cannot decide on his own initiative to desert his post without breaking the vows which he took at ordination".

The church council added that it is drafting a ruling on the "consequences of such decisions".

At the same time, the council said it regretted that conversations between council representatives and government officials last July had not had the expected results (see EPS No. 30) and expressed the "strong hope" that the causes of friction between church and state would quickly be cleared up and removed.

E.P.S., Geneva

Australian Church Leaders Urge Inquiry

(Sydney) - Australian church leaders have urged the Commonwealth Minister for Territories to set up an independent "judicial inquiry" into a recent clash between a tax-collecting patrol and villagers in Navuneram, New Britain, which resulted in two deaths and thirteen injuries (see EPS No. 34).

A joint statement was forwarded to the government officials by the Australian Council of the World Council of Churches and the National Missionary Council,

seriously questioning "whether the general approach and the methods employed toward the collection of the tax were rightly conceived and wisely implemented".

Signers of the statement included Dr. H.W.K. Mowll, Anglican Archbishop of Sydney and president of the Australian Council of the WCC, and Bishop R.C. Kerle, honorary secretary of the National Missionary Council. E.P.S., Geneva

Canadian Lutherans Consider Merger

(Winnipeg) - The seven synods of Canadian Lutheranism are considering merging and withdrawing from their parent churches in the United States, following a meeting this month in Winnipeg, Canada.

An organisational scheme for the proposed church has been outlined and Dr. Edward Krempin, treasurer of the Canada District of the American Lutheran Church, told the group that formation of a united Lutheran Church of Canada is financially possible. There are 240,000 Lutherans in Canada. E.P.S., Geneva

Scandinavian Bible Societies Hold Conference

(Oslo) - Forty delegates from four Scandinavian countries attended a conference of Bible Societies in Oslo last month to review their work and study possibilities of distributing copies of the Scripture more widely.

Among those present were Bishop Gudmundsson, chairman of the Icelandic Bible Society, representatives of the British and Foreign Bible Society, the Netherlands Bible Society, the Union of Bible Societies in Germany, and Mr. Olivier Béguin, general secretary, and the Rev. E.H. Robertson, study secretary, of the United Bible Societies. E.P.S., Geneva

BCC Makes Plea for Racial Integration

(London) - The churches cannot consent to limitation of immigration on grounds of colour, according to a statement from the Executive Committee of the British Council of Churches. Meeting in London on September 17, the committee said it was "shocked by the evidence of colour prejudice as one of the causes of recent disturbances involving coloured people in Great Britain".

The churches, the statement continued, "have a responsibility to demonstrate their care for people from such areas as the West Indies, and to work for the eradication of attitudes based on fear, self-interest, suspicion or ignorance".

"We recognise that much has already been done to integrate immigrants into the established community", the statement concluded, "and believe that, with willingness, understanding and perseverance on both sides, the integration which is desirable is also possible". E.P.S., Geneva

Waldensian Synod Meets in Italy

(Torre Pelice) - Two problems facing the Waldensian Church in Italy were spotlighted at this year's synod meeting at Torre Pelice - the mass migration of members from the Piedmont mountains to the industrial centres and the increasing difficulty in training new pastors.

Reports submitted to the synod said that there had been an alarming decline in church attendance because entire congregations had been broken up by the growing movement from farm to city. In an effort to help solve the problem the church has recently opened an agricultural school at Torre Pelice to help young farmers and a pamphlet urging people not to leave the villages will be distributed to all Waldensians. The synod voted to grant a series of scholarships for theological study.

In other action, the synod set up a Waldensian women's association; heard reports from southern Italy of high church attendance; learned that during the past year sixteen churches, two parish houses and two homes had been built or renovated; and were told that for the first time, Italian Protestants were able to exhibit their literature at a bookstall at the Milan Fair.

Pastor Ermanno Rostan was named new moderator of the church, succeeding Pastor Achille Deodato. E.P.S., Geneva

Minority Lutheran Church Leaders Meet in Poland

(Gdynia) - Sixty Lutheran leaders from eighteen countries on both sides of the Iron Curtain attended a four-day meeting in Gdynia, Poland, this month, in what was called "a great step toward strengthening the common life of the churches in East and West".

At the conference's closing session, Archbishop Jaan Kiivit of the Estonian Church said that for the isolated Lutheran churches it was of great importance that they had been given a chance to renew contacts, continue inter-church theological discussions and share in the life of churches in other parts of the world.

Present were representatives from Poland, Latvia, Estonia, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Austria, United Kingdom, Ireland, France, the Netherlands, Italy, Switzerland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland and West Germany.

Conference lectures and discussions dealt with Creation in its relation to order, the Commandments, salvation, man's mission and the scientific view of life. E.P.S., Geneva

South Africa Visit "Shattering", Pastor Brennecke Reports

(Berlin) - A visit to South Africa is a "shattering experience", according to Pastor Gerhard Brennecke of Berlin, director of the Berlin Missionary Society, just back from a six months' stay in Africa.

Speaking at a press conference in Berlin this month, he said that because there is no respect for coloured people in South Africa there can be no permanent solution of the problem of co-existence of different races. One of the measures causing particular suffering to the coloured population in South Africa is the government's resettlement policy, he said. One of the results of this policy is the churches which stand empty because coloured people have had to move.

However, Dr. Brennecke said he was particularly impressed by the efforts of the churches in Africa to work out a Christian way of life that was really African and not just an offshoot of European church life. He cited the "extraordinary" growth of church membership and said that in some places it had increased 100 per cent since 1945. E.P.S., Geneva

In Brief

The newly finished First Greek Evangelical Church in Athens was consecrated on September 7 as a climax to a celebration marking its centenary. Preacher for the service was Dr. G.T. Bellhouse, moderator of the Presbyterian Church of England. The congregation has been aided by a loan from the Ecumenical Church Loan Fund and by gifts from United States churches, through the Division of Inter-Church Aid and Service to Refugees of the World Council of Churches.

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Bishop Volkmar Herntrich, 49, of the Lutheran Church of Hamburg, and a member of the World Council of Churches' Central Committee, was killed on September 14 near Nauen, East Germany, in an auto crash. He was on his way to a conference of European Minority Lutheran Churches in Gdynia, Poland, when the accident occurred. Bishop Herntrich also was a member of the Administrative Committee of the WCC's Division of Inter-Church Aid and Service to Refugees. For many years prior to the beginning of 1958 he was president of the German YWCA.

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An organisation of pilots, members of the Assemblies of God, has been formed with thirty charter members. President of the Aero Fellowship, the Rev. Emil Balliet, said that it will provide faster transportation for evangelists, missionaries and ministers travelling for revivals, conventions and other church meetings.

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The official film of the Lambeth Conference will be released this month. Directed and produced by Mr. Ray Kinsey for S.P.C.K., the film is in colour and runs for thirty-two minutes. Narration is by Mr. Leo Genn, the well-known actor.

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Dr. Samuel McCrea Cavert, former general secretary of the US Conference for the World Council of Churches, will deliver the William Henry Hoover Lectures on Christian Unity at the Disciples Divinity House of the University of Chicago. Dates for the four lectures on "The Road to Unity" are November 17-20.

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The first assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Ambo-Kavango Church has been held at Engela, South West Africa. The new church is made up of former mission congregations of the Finnish Missionary Society. The assembly voted to apply for membership in the Lutheran World Federation.

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Greek Orthodox Bishop Meletios of Paris, assisted by six priests of the Belgian Orthodox Church, celebrated the divine liturgy in the chapel of the Protestant Pavilion at the Brussels Exhibition. Present were members of the Greek diplomatic corps in Belgium, including the Greek ambassador, and clergy representatives of the Greek Church and the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul.

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Mr. Charles Malik, Greek Orthodox layman of Lebanon who has been active in the work of the World Council of Churches, is the new president of the United Nation General Assembly. He was elected on September 16.

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Senior Zoltan Kardy of Pecs has been selected as the only candidate for bishop of the Southern District of the Hungarian Lutheran Church to succeed Dr. Lajos Ordass. He has been recommended by the district's church council, which urged the Hungarian government to approve his selection if he is named in an October election by the district's congregations.

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"The YMCAs of the World", a 207-page handbook, has just been published, describing each national YMCA movement, giving its history and present situation in its own national setting.

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After a four year struggle, it has been possible to show the American-made film, "Martin Luther", in Montevideo, Uruguay. Reports say it was well received both by the public and most of the critics. During the next few months it is planned to show the film in Buenos Aires, Santiago, Guatemala City and Mexico City.

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The National Assembly of Ghana has declared the Christian festivals of Christmas, Good Friday and Easter Monday as official holidays.

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German Djoris, Bishop of Zica, has been consecrated as the new Patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church and enthroned in Belgrade. The ceremony was attended by the bishops of the Serbian Church. He succeeds the late Patriarch Vikentije.

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The Very Rev. John Baillie, one of the presidents of the World Council of Churches, received an honorary degree of theology from the University of Jena in East Germany on its 400th anniversary.

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Jews who have become Christians have not "ceased to be Jews but remain an integral part of their people", according to a statement issued by the Executive Committee of International Hebrew Christian Alliance at a recent meeting in Switzerland. "Every member of the alliance regards himself as a Jew, loving the nation from which he is proud to have sprung and pledged to its service. In particular Hebrew Christians in Israel declare themselves loyal in every way to the state in which they live and to which they belong".

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Correction

The recent seminar on Christians facing the problems of world peace, the studies on "the Biblical Approach to Peace" and the further discussions and consultation reported in the September 5 issue of the Ecumenical Press Service are sponsored by the YWCA. E.P.S., Geneva

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DocumentChristian Concerns in Economic and Social Development

(Received by the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Nyborg, Denmark, August 1958, commended to the Churches for study and appropriate action).

The critical state of the struggle to accelerate the economic and social development of the countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America, demands the attention of Christians everywhere.

Two-thirds of mankind are stirred by new hopes and quickening social change. Political, economic and social ferments, occasioned by Western technology and new awareness of the requirements of human dignity are at work in these societies. In this revolutionary situation the peoples should see the hand of God and in obedience give new heed to the claims of justice and common humanity. Beneath all divisions, men everywhere are brothers through the love of God, and have now become neighbours through knowledge given by God. There is in consequence a common responsibility for economic and social development in the interest of a more genuine world community. While some useful first steps have been taken, the nations, and in their own field, the churches, are called by the greatness of the challenge to make a greater response.

The basic fact is that most of the countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America are desperately short of capital and technical skills. Only with substantial outside aid from the economically more developed countries in North America, Europe and Australasia can countries with soundly based development plans hope to carry them through and avert the human disasters that will follow from their failure. Though much has been done through various United Nations agencies, bilateral and multilateral programmes, colonial development schemes and private investment, the response so far is insufficient. Far more needs to be done, more coherently and more persistently.

At the same time, programmes of aid must be related to the stimulation of international trade, to problems of population growth, to indigenous educational ventures, and to many other elements of an economically sound society.

Against this background, attention is drawn to the following vital points:

1. Social and economic progress require balanced programmes of social and economic development including agriculture, industry, basic services, education and health programmes. Christians should be aware of the interrelationship of such programmes as well as sensitive to the effects on people of these vast changes.
2. Economic assistance takes many forms. This variety has many advantages, but requires better correlation, preferably under United Nations auspices, so that assistance can be more rationally planned. With safeguards against misuse, and can gain more dynamic public support. Regional development schemes may favour the kind of joint planning required for effective collaboration and mutual respect.
3. Far more grants and generous loans are essential. Contributing countries need to work out long-term policies for their assistance. If at least one per cent of the national income of countries were devoted to these purposes,

the picture would become much more hopeful. So that people can recognize their responsibilities and their failures, we need both at the international and at the governmental level a clear statement of what is being done and how it is being done.

4. In pressing for further assistance we are aware that this raises a number of economic difficulties for contributing countries. It may require an increase in private savings for foreign investment and an increase in taxation where aid comes from public funds. Such assistance may also make it possible for a country to utilize to a greater extent its own productive capacity. As Christians, we call on nations to make the necessary adjustments in their economic policies.
5. Trade and monetary policies of the more developed countries often have a quite disproportionate effect on the ability of the less developed countries to carry out their development programmes. The former need to take fully into account the international effect of their policies. This particularly concerns their attitude to schemes for stabilizing commodity prices, whose instability is often crippling to under-developed countries.
6. International private investment has an important role to play, and both receiving and contributing countries have to follow constructive policies so that such investment can be stimulated to share responsibly in the common task.
7. Economic aid will be most effective only when there is honorable trusteeship in the administration of such developmental plans. Governments and their leaders should be scrupulously responsible in their relations to each other and realize the need of public confidence.

There are special tasks confronting the Churches in the present situation:

1. Christians should help to spread knowledge in their own countries about development programmes and encourage a responsible attitude to them.
2. Qualified individuals should be helped to find a vocation in work for economic and social development with the understanding and dedication required.
3. Christian institutions in the economically less developed countries should review the technical services they provide, in the light of the requirements of a dynamic and balanced development programme. New opportunities for Christian service in this field present a claim on the resources of church agencies.
4. Of special importance is the ministry to those uprooted by rapid social change. The breakdown of family, tribal and community patterns is a challenge to Christian evangelism and service. The Christian churches in these areas need the prayers and support of the churches in other parts of the world.

We commend these concerns to the attention and earnest consideration of the churches, as they plan for the years ahead.

E.P.S., Geneva

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